

Washington, D.C. –It's time to get ready for the big national switch to digital TV and Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) wants the residents in his district to know that there's federal financial help available. Soon consumers will be able to purchase a DTV converter box that plugs into an existing analog set and allows continued free television reception. As of Jan. 1, the federal government began accepting applications to provide households up to two \$40 coupons that can be used toward the purchase of these converter boxes. The boxes will be available at retail stores that sell electronic equipment.

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Conventional television broadcasting, as we currently know it, will come to an end February 17, 2009. For years, broadcasters have been making dramatic changes as they prepare for the 2009 federally mandated switch from analog to digital television (DTV).

"Now consumers need to start preparing as well," Wilson said. "This switch to digital TV could disproportionately affect seniors and those living in rural areas. I just want to make sure that the people in Ohio's Sixth District know that there's federal financial help available to make the switch to digital TV," Wilson said.

In Ohio, there are approximately 720,800 households that receive free over-the-air television and are at risk of losing television reception if they do not take the necessary steps to transition to digital. Nationally, more than 34 million households will be affected by the DTV transition, including approximately 70 million television sets, according to data released by the National Association of Broadcasters.

Television sets connected to cable or satellite should not be affected, and will continue to receive broadcast programming after that date. But, television sets that are not connected to cable, satellite, a telephone company television service provider or do not have a built-in digital

tuner, will need a converter box to continue receiving broadcast television signals after the transition occurs.

Prior to the February 2009 transition date, consumers who do not subscribe to cable or satellite television, but who receive free, broadcast-only TV reception will have three options to navigate the DTV transition:

- (1) Purchase a set-top converter box that will convert the digital signal into analog for an existing television set;
- (2) Purchase a new television set with a built-in digital tuner; or
- (3) Subscribe to cable, satellite or a telephone company television service provider, in which case analog sets will continue to function.

To apply for the \$40 coupons to help defray the cost of the converter boxes consumers can call 888-DTV-2009 (888-388-2009) or can apply directly at www.DTV2009.gov .

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